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Sixty-first year

Letter dated 6 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in response to the letters dated 21 February and 24 February 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations regarding the tragedy in Khojaly, circulated as documents of the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/60/686-S/2006/118 and A/60/697-S/2006/128).

The letters continue the pattern of distorted and groundless accusations against my country, conveniently forgetting that the events of those years were clearly documented through eyewitness testimonies, and Azerbaijani ones among them (see annex). My delegation has previously reflected on the issue on several occasions, most recently in document A/59/743-S/2005/184. The truth about the Khojaly tragedy is revealed and clearly demonstrated in the accounts of Azerbaijanis covering the event and dealing with it. In an interview with the Czech journalist Jana Mazalova in March 1992, only days after the events, the then President of Azerbaijan stated, "The massacres were staged".

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 6 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The truth about the events in Khojaly: evidence from Azerbaijani sources

For already 14 years after the vents in Khojaly, official Baku has been obstinately fanning anti-Armenian hysteria with the aim of falsifying the factual history and trying to put the blame for those tragic events on Armenians.

The events in Khojaly, which led to the deaths of civilians, were the result solely of political intrigues and power struggle in Azerbaijan.

The real reasons are most convincingly reflected in the accounts of Azerbaijanis themselves — as participants in and eyewitnesses to what happened — as well as of those who know the whole inside story of the events in Baku.

Khojaly, along with Shushi and Agdam, was one of the main strongholds from which Stepanakert, the capital of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic, was shelled continuously and mercilessly for the three winter months of 1991/92 with artillery, missiles and launchers used for targeting cities.

Knocking out the weapon emplacements in Khojaly and thus freeing the airport were the only way for the Nagorno Karabagh Republic to ensure the physical survival of its population, condemned by Azerbaijan to complete annihilation. The daily shelling of Stepanakert from nearby Khojaly took the lives of hundreds of peaceful inhabitants — women, children and old people.

The then President of Azerbaijan, Ayaz Mutalibov, has stated that "the assault on Khojaly was not a surprise attack".[a] In an interview in 1992 with the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* he emphasized that "a corridor was kept open by the Armenians for people to leave".[b] However, a column of civilians was fired on by armed units of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan on the approaches to the Agdam district border, a fact later confirmed by Ayaz Mutalibov, who linked this criminal act to attempts by the opposition to remove him from power, and blamed it entirely for what happened. In his interview with the Russian magazine, *Novoye Vremya*, Mutalibov stated that "the shooting of the Khojaly residents was obviously organized by someone to take control in Azerbaijan".[c]

According to Azerbaijani journalist M. Safarogly, "Khojaly occupied an important strategic position. The loss of Khojaly was a political fiasco for Mutalibov."[d]

Furthermore, there is a statement by an Azerbaijani journalist, Arif Yunusov, which clearly states, "The town and its inhabitants were deliberately sacrificed for a political purpose — to prevent the Popular Front of Azerbaijan from coming to power."[e] In this case, though, the Azerbaijanis themselves are named as the perpetrators of the tragedy.

Similar comments and views concerning the events in Khojaly are known to have been made by several other highly placed Azerbaijani officials and journalists.

Tamerlan Karayev, at one time Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan, bears witness: "The tragedy was committed by the authorities of Azerbaijan", and specifically by "someone highly placed".[f]

The Czech journalist Jana Mazalova, who by an oversight of the Azerbaijanis was included in both of the groups of press representatives to be shown the bodies mutilated by "the Armenians", noted a substantial difference in the two cases. When she went to the scene immediately after the events, Mazalova did not see any traces of barbarous treatment of the bodies. Yet a couple of days later the journalists were shown disfigured bodies already "prepared" for taping.

Who killed the peaceful inhabitants of Khojaly and then mutilated their bodies, if the tragedy occurred not in a village taken by Armenians or on the route of the humanitarian corridor, but on the approaches to the town of Agdam — on territory fully controlled by the Azerbaijanis?

The independent Azerbaijani cameman Chingiz Mustafaev, who took pictures on 28 February and 2 March 1992, had doubts about the official Azerbaijani version and began his own inquiry. The journalist's very first report to the Moscow news agency D-Press on the possible complicity of the Azerbaijani side in the crimes cost Mustafaev his life: he was killed not far from Agdam under circumstances that are still unexplained.

The former President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, himself recognized that Azerbaijan's "former leadership were also guilty" of the events in Khojaly. Already in April 1992, according to the agency Bilik-Dunyasy, he had commented as follows: "The bloodshed will be to our advantage. We should not interfere in the course of events." To whose "advantage" the bloodletting was is clear to everyone. *Megapolis Express* wrote, "It cannot be denied that, if the Popular Front of Azerbaijan actually set far-reaching objectives, they have been achieved. Mutalibov has been compromised and overthrown, public opinion worldwide has been shaken, and the Azerbaijanis and their Turkish brethren have believed in the so-called genocide of the Azerbaijani people in Khojaly."[g]

One other tragic detail. It has become clear since the events that 47 Armenians were already being held hostage on 26 February in "peaceful" Khojaly, a fact that the Azerbaijani mass media "covering" the tragedy has failed to mention. After the liberation of Khojaly only 13 hostages (including 6 women and 1 child) were found there; the other 34 were taken away by the Azerbaijanis to an unknown location. The only thing known about them is that they were led from the village on the night of the operation, but never reached Agdam. There is still no information concerning what eventually happened to them or confirming that they continued to be held captive by the Azerbaijanis.

In the light of the above facts it may confidently be said that the killing of peaceful inhabitants of the village of Khojaly was the work of the Azerbaijani side, which committed this crime against its own people in the name of political intrigues and the struggle for power.

Notes

[a] *Ogonyok* magazine, Nos. 14-15, 1992.

[b] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 April 1992.

[c] *Novoye Vremya*, 6 March 2001.

[d] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 1993.

[e] *Zerkalo* newspaper, July 1992.

[f] *Mikhalifat* newspaper, 28 April 1992.

[g] *Megapolis Express*, No. 17, 1992.